

The Ministry of the Prophet Elijah (excerpts from Lesson 61 OT Survey)

Brief Overview

- The Chaotic Kingdom Stage
- The Miraculous Ministry of Elijah
- Our primary goal is to illustrate that God **continued to faithfully guide His people**, even though **Israel was now split by tragic civil war and was living in disobedience**.
- Secondary goal is to understand the significance of Elijah's four interpersonal encounters throughout his ministry.

Instructional Objectives:

- To state three features of Elijah's encounters with Ahab (1 Kgs. 17:1-18:46).
- To identify four refreshing elements of Elijah's edifying encounter with God.
- To note three components of Elijah's exasperating encounter with Ahaziah.
- To list Elisha's three stages of maturation from the encouraging encounters with Elijah.

The Ministry of Elijah

- Individuals are recognized as "famous" because of particular influences they've had on other people.
- Certain renowned pastors, teachers, philosophers, scientists, and inventors all impacted the lives of others, either through direct or indirect encounters.
- Today we will highlight four specific encounters that Elijah had, which in turn affected millions of people through the history of Israel and its neighbors.

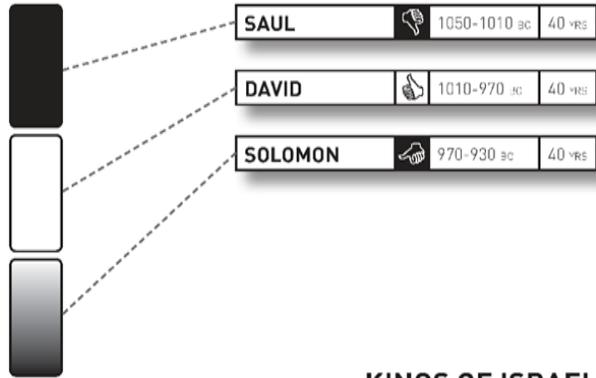
A quick backdrop for context if you're not familiar with this time in Biblical History:



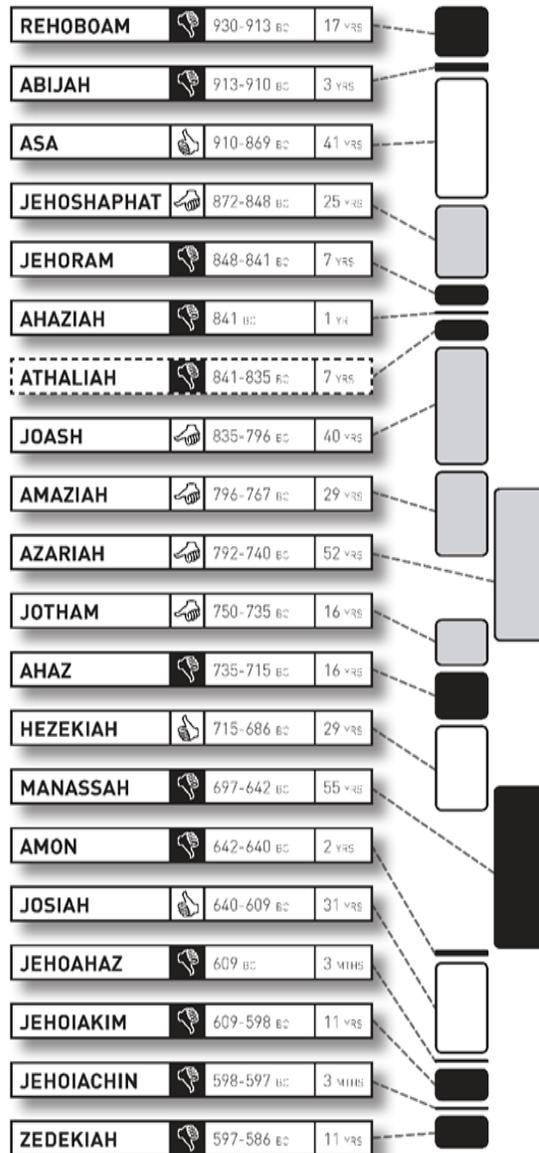
THE KINGS OF JUDAH & ISRAEL

FROM 1 & 2 KINGS

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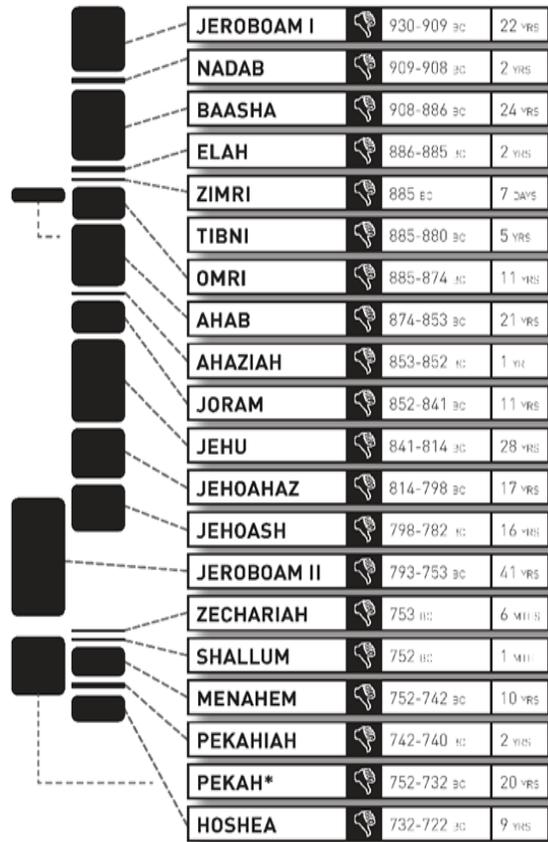


KINGS OF JUDAH



KINGDOM DIVIDES (922 BC)

KINGS OF ISRAEL



ISRAEL ASSIMILATED BY ASSYRIA (722 BC)

KEY

- "Did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, as his father David had done."
- "Did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, but not as his father David had done." (i.e. completely rid the land of idolatry)
- "Did what was evil in the eyes of the LORD."

JUDAH EXILED BY BABYLON (586 BC)

* Pekah's 20-year reign presumably includes a period of rule as rival to Menahem.

Jezebel: This evil woman comes from a Phoenician clan of idolatry which she truly represented. Her father was king of all Phoenicia: called "king of the Zidonians," Ethbaal (1 Kings 16:31). Now, Baal is a Canaanite-Phoenician god of fertility and Jezebel's father took on that name as title.

Ahab: Although, marriage of Hebrews with the Canaanite peoples was strictly forbidden by Mosaic law Ahab, King of Israel, still married her and scripture traces his apostasy directly to her influence (1 Kings 6:30-34). As a result, Ahab's evils were said to be more than any of his predecessors. He gave himself to Baal worship, with all its vile accompaniments, establishing a Baal cult center at Samaria, the national capital, and thereby leading the whole nation into apostasy.

A. OBSERVE ELIJAH'S ENCOUNTERS WITH AHAB

- King Ahab was the epitome of evil and wickedness.
- It was not coincidental that he married Queen Jezebel (a name that today personifies wickedness).
- Elijah had four prominent occasions to confront this king with God's unfailing power, through his office as prophet.

1. Elijah predicted a three-and-a-half-year drought (1 Kgs 17:1).

Notice God's protection of Elijah during this drought (17:2-24).

2. Elijah predicted a victory over Ahab's prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel (1 Kgs. 18:17-40).

3. Elijah predicted the drought would end, with the coming rains (1 Kgs. 18:41-46).

4. Elijah predicted that Ahab and Jezebel would both receive God's judgment through insulting deaths (1 Kgs. 21:17-26).

Note: The prophecy's fulfillment was recorded in 1 Kgs. 22:29-40 and 2 Kgs. 9:30-37.

B. LET'S CONSIDER ELIJAH'S EDIFYING ENCOUNTER WITH GOD

Even though Elijah had won a tremendous battle on Mt. Carmel, in 1 Kgs. 18, he began to suffer from depression or "ministerial burnout" in 1 Kgs. 19.

- In particular, he suffered from:

1. Exhaustion (his natural rut – pattern of behavior)

2. Fear (of Jezebel)

3. Suicidal temptations (based upon a poor self-image and rejection of God's presence)

Notice how his encounter with God changed his entire condition:

a. Physical restoration (I Kgs. 19:5-8) - God's rest and nourishing food revived Elijah.

b. Spiritual restoration (I Kgs. 19:9-14) - God reminded Elijah of His Power and presence in the wind, earthquake, fire and small voice.

c. Mental restoration (I Kgs. 19: 15-17) - God's "plan" for two new kings and a new prophet was a refreshing alternative to Elijah's despair and hopelessness.

d. Social/psychological restoration (I Kgs. 19:18) - God announced that there were other faithful believers (at least 7,000!). This was extremely encouraging to Elijah (compare his comments of solitude in verses 10 and 14).

C. LET'S CONTEMPLATE ELIJAH'S ENCOUNTER WITH AHAZIAH

- King Ahaziah, the son of Ahab, began to reign as Israel's king following his father's death.
- It did not take long to observe that he would mimic wicked Ahab through Ahab's influence. **Speaks to the power of a Father's Influence!!!!**

1. Elijah was angered by Ahaziah's reliance upon pagan gods (2 Kgs. 1:1-8).
2. Elijah judged two army troops for their overt opposition to his stance as prophet (2 Kgs. 1:9-12).
3. Elijah personally confronted King Ahaziah with the same, consistent message he first issued (2 Kgs. 1:13-18).

D. FINALLY, ELIJAH'S ENCOURAGING ENCOUNTERS WITH ELISHA

- Elijah realized that God would soon replace him with the young prophet Elisha.
- There were three **stages** of young Elisha's maturation (based upon mutual encounters) which were encouraging to Elijah. (From I Kgs. 19:16)

Stage #1 - Elisha wanted to obey Elijah yet showed signs of dependence upon his own family (I Kgs. 19:19-21).

Stage #2 - Elisha refused to leave Elijah (three times) when he knew that Elijah was about to die (2Kgs. 2:1-8).

Stage #3 - Elisha desired above all else to identify with the "spirit" (or essence) of Elijah, his spiritual father (2 Kgs. 2:9-12).

III. SUMMARY:

Elijah was a powerful man of God. What made his testimony strong, was the impact of his interpersonal encounters. Four particular encounters, which affected millions of people, included those confrontations with Ahab, God, Ahaziah and Elisha.